"An hour's halt is sufficient, and we soon enter a wilder country. On our right stands a perpendicular calcareous cliff, and a series of strata appear vertically on the surface. A fissure between two of them, like the one already noticed at Sou La, also marks the entrance to a grotto. The Tham Pa Kouang (grotto of the great stag) is celebrated, and it well repays a visit. [273] A staircase about twenty yards high leads to it; on the right a ruined house which leans against the rock is occasionally used as a lodging by some priests; red devils with large heads, armed with sabres, are carved on both sides of the entrance. The first hall is spacious; it is fifteen yards high, and the natural irregularities have been respected and even turned to account; the walls are decorated with green moss, and the ceiling is made of large stalactites joined and rounded. Upon the ground, upon the steps, upon isolated stones and in the hollows, everywhere, in the midst of the greatest disorder, a people of gods of every shape and every size has found a home. Statuettes from one yard high, to one or two inches, of black or gilt wood, of marble, bronze, or copper; gods standing with their hands raised as though in benediction; stout Buddhas, with bare heads, squatting down, their arms folded across their stomach, their shoulders often covered with a piece of stuff arranged like a cape; bonzes, saints, prophets and their servants, showing the same type as the idols of Siam. The whole Buddhist Olympia is united here, and when the idols are carefully examined, one believes that traces may be found amongst them of all religions and of all nations; here something from Greece, there a reminiscence of Egyptian art, while

further on a marble head ornamented by a raised diadem, reminds one of the Khiner monuments. All these gods lie about everywhere, turned in every direction, hidden or fallen, often covered with dust; there is not a corner without its deity, and niches are often cut by the hand of man and ornamented with carvings of gilded wood, to shelter an exceptionally venerated saint. Even [274] animals are represented; in one rock two elephants are cut out and dyed green, each carrying a personage. In another corner stands a white elephant, one of the incarnations of Buddha. The body, which is about a yard and a half high, is made of wood and stuff, and the whole is covered with calico. Some small earthen cones, surmounted by a stick, are arranged in front of the sacred animal, forming a miniature garden with a tiny staircase. I believe they represent something analogous to our ex-votos. If I can believe the interpreter's explanations, these earthen cakes are placed here by people who have been ill and wish to thank heaven for preserving their life; the number of the cones corresponds with their age. The entrance hall, which at the first glance resembles an old curiosity shop, is lighted from the outside; it leads to other galleries, which we explored with a lantern. Corridor succeeds corridor, it seems as though the grotto were endless, and it must really extend for a great distance. Legend relates that it communicates with Laï Chou. Sometimes the passages are so narrow that we are forced to crawl through them, sometimes the rooms are large enough for us to stand upright. In some of them a bamboo bed

denotes the sojourn of some pilgrim or belated fisherman. One division, which is reached by a rectangular entrance, is filled with a multitude of small divinities of the same size and form. This must be a reserve stock, for the walls are covered with red and gilt paper."

10: d'Orleans--287-288 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 531, 778

"While our men rest, we are carried to the right bank of the stream, where there is a grotto in the middle of a calcareous cliff; in front of the opening there is a kind of balustrade cut in the stone, and a staircase leads to the celebrated sanctuary of Pakou, already described by Garnier; here only one room is found, and that is not very deep, but it is filled with religious objects similar to those at Nam Ou; and we have the same experiences as upon that day, for we can hardly step in the midst of this field of gods for fear of crushing some of them with every movement. I notice several banners, some floating and others rolled up, most of them represent two divinities standing upon lotus flowers; there is a small gilt chest in the form of a tabernacle; and, higher up, a bell in gilt plaster, a form derived from the lotus bud; on the sides of the room are white dragons with goggle eyes, showing their teeth. They are of Chinese design, a man (all are in plaster) [288] with his hands on his hips, is on horseback upon a pedestal, he also has tusks, round eyes and extraordinarily large ears; and on the ground, in the midst of fragments of innumerable prayers written in Laotian upon palm leaves, lie innumerable statues, some of them wearing chasubles; a few gods are riding upon elephants; while chariots are also represented by small wooden vehicles placed upon four wheels, and ornamented with pieces that overhang them like rostra. A series of small divinities are carved, each in separate medallions, upon painted panels of wood fastened in pairs."

10: d'Orleans--320-321 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 411, 438, 443, 778

"They [LSS: women merchants in Luang Prabang] have a very diversified stock of goods to choose from, including gold embroidered shirts made by the Lus, Siam brocaded vests, old silver, bracelets made of Kas bronze, and hatchets and other weapons in old bronze; these latter are very scarce and difficult to buy, as they are preserved with superstitious reverence by the families to which they belong. The hatchets, some of which are straight while others are curved, are very characteristic, while the ivory-handled knives represent yaks, the genii of the Buddhist religion, [321] similar to those which are found in the interior of Borneo."

10: d'Orleans--330-331 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 532, 778

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "The market occupies the principal artery of the town, with numerous pagodas and palaces to the right and left, one of those on the left being Ouate Mai, ouate being the word used in Laotian, Siamese, and Burmese, to signify temple, while mai means new. The pagoda itself from 100 to 130 feet long by fifty to seventy feet broad, with whitewashed walls and a tile roof. The interior is very similar to that of a Catholic church, with pictures on the walls representing religious legends, and at the end an altar, upon which are accumulated ornaments of all kinds and statues of gods in every variety of pose, while in the centre, as in all the other temples, is a golden figure of Buddha seated, from seven to ten feet high. The features are the same in all these statues of Buddha, and, with his legs crossed, and his hands resting upon his thigh the statue which is more the outcome of high strung religious feelings, and represents the very spirit of the races which have [331] succeeded one another upon this soil for so many centuries, than the work of any great artist, seems to have concentrated in it attitude, its countenance, and its gaze, the essence of the moral beliefs, the object of existence, and the reason of death, as they were conceived by one-half of the old world."

10: d'Orleans--331-332 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 173, 532, 778

"With the exception of the principal statue, the gods are not seated, and in this pagoda of Ouate Maï, the divinity held in the greatest veneration is one with outstretched hands as if in the act of giving the benediction. This is the Prabang or 'Buddha of the gold washings,' as he is made out of the gold found in the district. Tradition has it that this deity was brought here by the Laotians, when they emigrated from Muong-Theng, and that, after being carried off to Bangkok by the Siamese, it was brought back to Luang Prabang about twenty years ago. Another legend is that the statue was sent about 200 years ago by the king of Cambodia; but in any case it has given its name to the town, and it is covered with embroideries and chasubles, and placed in the recess of a reliquary to which diverse ornaments are suspended. In front of this is a movable bronze grating, ending in two dragons with intertwined tails, called Nâk, while to the left of the altar is a pulpit very similar to a sedan chair, from which the bonzes [332] give their lessons and recite their prayers."

10: d'Orleans--332 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 524, 778, 793

"Outside the principal building, in the courtyard of the pagoda, [LSS: the pagoda of Ouate Maï in Luang Prabang] are a series of ongmong, or small buildings which contain the statues of the gods; pyramids (Tâte) containing the bones of prominent bonzes or members of the Royal Family, and plaster bells like the lotus flower, behind all these buildings, hidden among the trees, being the houses of the bonzes, whose pupils we remark at play, the game at which they play, with a hollow ball made out of bamboo canes twisted together, being one which requires great skill."

10: d'Orleans--333 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 532, 778, 793, 177.35

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "Above the market and built against the hill is the residence of one of the four leading bonzes from whom we had a visit yesterday; and upon going to see him there we find that the interior is ornamented with coloured designs and pictures, given him by Frenchmen, of the Eiffel Tower and so forth, with a small chapel in one corner and a library of religious books, many of which are rolled up in palm leaves. The only curious object in the adjoining pagoda is a wooden statue of Buddha (Pasine), in a crouching attitude, like that of a monkey when scratching his chin. The skull is very depressed and misshapen; and it is possible that those who offered the image were desirous of depicting the incident in his life, when having complained to God of the temptation which the flesh evoked in him, he received by way of reply a violent blow on the head in order to crush his carnal appetites."

10: d'Orleans--339-340 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 346, 361, 532, 778

"Part of the town is very sparsely inhabited, a few ruins on the track indicating the site [340] of the ancient ramparts, while turning back in the direction of the river, we have on our left the grounds of several houses belonging to mandarins, and on the right, at the foot of the hill, a group of pagodas well worth a visit.

The most important of these is Ouate Uisoune, so named after the king who built it. Dating, as the Siamese Colonel tells us, from the fourteenth century, it is in a very decrepit state, but there is much in it worth seeing; notably the gates which are of carved wood and gilt. To the right in Pra Noriei, the fourarmed goddess, borne up by Kroute, the god of the birds, and in the centre are two women, one of whom is being carried by five elephants, while to the left a god standing erect upon a buffalo is supposed to represent the chief of the coolies who weed the courtyards of the pagodas. In the interior are a number of wooden columns covered with gilded designs and others of masonry, together with pictures representing the history of Pra Uetsandaha and of Guadama. Upon the altar is a large gilt statue called Pratiao Ong Luong (great god)."

23: Franck--299-300 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 346, 361, 778

"Luang Prabang means Kingdom of the Divine Buddha. What more natural then than that there should be many Buddhist temples, shrines, and monasteries in its capital? Indeed there are so many on both sides of the river that the town might easily be mistaken for a holy city, devoted to priests and pilgrims. Some of the temple compounds are bare ground scattered with yellow-roofed buildings of Siamese or Burmese character, with big stupas made of mud bricks and more or less overgrown with vegetation, with mere cells raised on piles, in which languid bonzes meditate. Others are covered with groves of trees, shaded by masses of palm and banana leaves; but in them all great calm and quiet reigns. Just behind the main and market street fronting the royal palace is a rocky ridge called Pagoda Hill, two hundred feet above the plain and half encircled by the Nam-khan by which travelers unworthy of Fords come to [300] the capital from the east or south. It is worth climbing if only for the view it offers of the idyllic city and its surrounding semi-jungle; and along it ramble queer old religious structures, including one built over a gigantic 'footprint of Buddha' in the native rock."

68: Mouhot--95-96 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 776, 753, 778

"[HD: At Khao-Khoc, Siam. See category 116, p. 90] The Laotian is as superstitious as the Cambodian, and perhaps more so than the Siamese. If a person falls ill of a fever, or, indeed, is ever so slightly indisposed, they believe it to be owing to a demon who has entered his body. If any matter in which they are engaged goes wrong, or an accident happens when hunting, fishing, or cutting wood, it is the fault of the demon. In their houses they carefully preserve some object, generally a simple piece of wood, or some parasitic plant, whose form they fancy bears a resemblance to some part of the human [96] body; and this is constituted their household god, and prevents evil spirits from entering, or, at least, causes them speedily to depart."

68: Mouhot--120-121 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
778, 753

"[HD: The head mandarin of Chaiapume, a town in territory that is now central Siam] provided me with other elephants for a visit to some ruins existing about 3 leagues north of the town, at the foot of a mountain. The superstitious Laotians say that [121] these ruins contain gold, but that every one who has sought for it has been struck with madness."

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

acknowledge in the street a lady with whom one happens to be on particularly good terms. These things in Laos are fraught with an etiquette which is the legacy of a highly organized society not too far gone in decay.

The charm of Vientiane lies in the life and the customs of the people. Unless one is an amateur of pagoda architecture there is little else to be seen. The Laotians have preferred to work in wood, rather than stone, and their art, confined chiefly to the decoration by religious artists of the doors, pillars and interiors of pagodas, quickly perishes in such a climate.

Outside the town there is a great, grey, half-decayed *stupa*, built as a tomb for a hair of the Buddha. It is surrounded by a cloister, containing perhaps a thousand Buddha images; a collection of which the people of Vientiane are very proud. But even here, where the religion is practised in its purest form, there is a little degeneration, a little backsliding from the lofty philosophic conception; and the taint of magic practices shows itself. Selecting one of the numerous images as a personal tutelary divinity, the devotee subjects it to a kind of bribery similar to that sometimes practised in Southern Europe with images of the saints. In this case the image's chief function is healing, and when the sufferer recovers from any complaint he hastens to the pagoda to apply gold-leaf to the part of the Buddha corresponding to that where he has felt the pain in his own body. I was interested to deduce from this practice that the people of Vientiane are much plagued by headaches – perhaps those which accompany malaria.

Standing in a corner of the sanctuary was an ancient ithyphallic statue, an old Hindu divinity, no doubt, which had been worn smooth in the appropriate parts by the feminine adoration of a thousand years. I was told that the women of the French colony who wish for a child frequently emulate their husbands' pose of Lao-ization by coming here secretly to pay their respects. I wondered whether this clandestine tribute might not be extended

pious king who justified the bonzes' prophecies by his deeds. He 643*
built a magnificent pagoda to the memory of his father, the
Wat-Visoun (2), the materials for which were requisitioned from 346
175*

2. The edifice which bears this name dates from the time of the king Zakarine (1898). The enormous "stupa" next to it, which covered rich treasures which have only recently come to light, is now in the process of being restored.

the vassals of the northern provinces. Legend has it that the raft
carrying the columns provided by the king of Tran-Ninh sank /539/
downstream from Pak-Vet, and the inhabitants of the region still
say today that they can be seen at certain times of the year be-
neath the waters of the Nam-Khane.

Edict against the cult of the "Phis." The king's great piety 771
and his mystical attachment to the /73/ dogmas of orthodix 175*
Buddhism made him intolerant of the Brahmanic practices which 643*
continued to be honored by the peoples of his States. In 1527 he
prohibited the cult of the Genii and decreed that all the temples
erected to the "Phis" should be demolished. A pagoda called
"Sisouvannathevalok" (1) was built on the very site of the sanctuary/778/

1. This pagoda was destroyed by a tornado in 1883. The king at that time, His Majesty Sisavang-Vong, had it rebuilt in 1905 on the original foundations.

of the tutelary Genie of the capital. But it was impossible, even
for the supreme chief of existences, to drive from the heads of
people as fatalistic as his subjects were the innumerable superstitions
which they attached to accidents, to diseases and to the phenomena
of sky, earth and water. Despite the royal ordinances the cult of
the "Phis," together with a belief in sorcerers and witches, per-
sisted and still persists today.

Phothisarath was the first of the kings of Lan-Xang to leave his 663
Xieng-Thong palace and reside at Vientiane for many years. 175*

Thanks to its central location and its comparative nearness to 633
the kingdoms of Ayuthya and Annam, this city had grown ex-
tensively as a consequence of the development of trade. The
Kmers, who had been in full decline /74/ since the ruin of Angkor
by the kings of Ayuthya, no longer had any influence there. The

633 Lunet de la Jonquiere has deduced that the ramparts of
643• Vientiane were composed of brick walls from four to six
175• meters in height with an earth banquette inside. They in-
172 cluded three sections, the salients of which were provided
/712/ with circular forts about eight meters high. Two gates which were fortified and crowned with spearhead ornaments gave entrance to the second section, one on the east towards the That-Luong, and the other on the west at the exit of the present Luang-Prabang road.

royal palace in the pagoda of which the emerald Buddha (Pra-Keo), the sign of power and command /82/ which he had brought from Xieng-Mai in 1548 (1), was placed.

/778/ 1. The emerald Buddha was in reality cut from a block of green jasper. The Siamese were to capture it in 1778 and take it to Bangkok, of which it became the tutelary divinity and where the sumptuous temple which rises today in the first court of the royal palace was built for it in 1785.

172 Of the eighty some pagodas which Vientiane was to boast, the
633 Wat Pra-Keo was assuredly one of the greatest and most beautiful.
175• "The trees which veil it (today), the lianas which tie it to the columns and spread a mysterious shadow over its ruins make the visitor feel something of what the soul of the ancients felt on the threshold of a sacred wood. Brick openwork forms the enclosure and monumental staircases lead to the parvis. A dragon writhes on the ramps and raises its menacing head in a last coil. The columns of the gallery are graceful, tall, slender and without a base, but end in a capital of long, sharp leaves which fold outwards and look as though they were raised by the weight which they bear..." (2).

2. De Carne, op. cit. /Voyage en Indochine et dans l'Empire chinois. Paris, 1872./

175• The sanctuary was built on a terrace with three levels. The facade
172 opened onto a monumental portico whose three gateways and side
346 windows were richly framed /83/ /Page 83 is devoted to an illustra-
532 tion: "Ruins of the Pra-Keo at Vientiane"--Translator./ /84/ with many-colored sculptures. The whole edifice was entirely gilded on the outside.

175* easily drove back the Laotian detachments which were sent to
648* meet it and rejoined the main column in the vicinity of Vientiane
726 itself.

The siege of the city lasted four months, and when the Siamese entered the city Ong-Boun had fled with Chao-In, one of his sons (2).

2. According to Prince Damrong, Ong-Boun hid at Kham-Keut. According to His Royal Highness Phanuphanthavongswardja he took refuge in Annam. /Prince Damrong, Guerres siamo-birmanes, Bangkok, 1920. His Royal Highness Phanuphantuvongswardja, Repression de la revolte de Vientiane, Bangkok, 1926./

Chulalok took possession of the territory in the name of his sovereign, left a military occupation force, gave its administration to a governor who settled in the royal palace, and then regained
●/778/ Thanabury taking Ong-Boun's children with him and carrying off the Prabang and the Prakeo.

642 Interregnum (1778-1782). Four years passed during which
175* Vientiane lived /157/ in direct dependency on the Siamese government. At Bangkok, in the meantime, Phia-Tak was attracting attention by eccentricities which soon alienated the whole court. Finally this rude warrior went insane, disorders broke loose and General Chakkri, who was on duty in Cambodia, hastily returned to bring the rebels back into obedience. He strengthened the throne to his own profit, for he mounted it under the name of Phra-Phuti-Chao-Luong (June 1, 1782) (1).

1. This king, who is also called Rama the First, was the founder of the present dynasty. He transferred the seat of his government from the right bank of the Menam to the left bank, where he laid the first foundations of modern Bangkok.

648* Submission of Ong-Boun. Ong-Boun gained knowledge of these
175* events in his exile. He also learned that his sons had been kindly treated by the new sovereign, and he then decided to make his submission. The king of Siam displayed clemency, gave the aged prince permission to end his days in his old capital, and gave the government of the principality to his eldest son Chao-Nan.

369 Anou had built the new temple of Sisaket not far from the deconse-
175 crated Prakeo "with the purpose of attracting the grace of Heaven
/348/ to the souls of his parents as well as to those of all his relatives and to all the souls which people Hell and the world" (2). The corner-

2. Cf. inscription on the stele.

stone was laid on "Thursday, the ninth day of the waxing moon of the year Kap-San" (1824), in the midst of a large assembly of the populace.

778 Inauguration of the temple of Sisaket (1824). On this occasion
796 the king made innumerable gifts to the bonzes (clothing, sandals,
346 fans, iron pen points to write on latania leaves, mats, mattresses,
175* copper betel services, rice baskets, vases, metal drinking cups, carafes, goblets, etc.). He gave /163/ pieces of cloth to the poor, and generous bounties to artisans and musicians. The people walked in procession around the royal palace, carrying oriflammes and effigies of animals which were flowered and perfumed with incense. The holiday lasted three days, to the accompaniment of general rejoicing (1).

/ 1. Ibid. /Inscription on the stele./

346 This temple was the only one which the French found still standing when they reached Vientiane. Of the first enclosure there remain two 'thats', which have recently been restored, and an elegant square pavilion-library whose quadruple pinnacled roof is supported by a graceful colonnade. Three other pavilions have disappeared (2).

2. A bath pavilion, one for worship and one for the tom-toms and gongs.

A cloister pierced by a porch on each side surrounds the central sanctuary, the outer gallery of which discloses a gateway and finely worked windows under the triple porch roofs. The inside walls are
/532/ illuminated by frescoes surmounted by many niches in the form of lotus leaves where thousands of statuettes are grouped in pairs. A wooden ceiling is embellished with gilded panels, and on the altar stands a giant Buddha entirely covered with gold leaf.

Although not organized at first, their bands gradually formed 175*
into armed contingents which soon became known under the names 563
of /237/ black, yellow or red Flags, depending on the color of
their banners. In contrast to the Meos, who were called White
Flags (1) and whose settlement fifteen years previously had, on the

1. See above, pp. 212 and 213.

whole, been permanent and not too violent, the Hos waged a war
of brigandry which calls to mind the sinister exploits of the Grandes /579/
Compagnies which were dismembered by Du Guesclin. They razed
villages, held the terrorized inhabitants for ransom, or else hired
themselves out to the inhabitants to protect them against other
bands. The cantons of the Black River were the first to fall prey to
their pillaging, but then the leaders of the region came to terms
with them, interested them in their internal disputes, took them
with them to the Tonkinese delta to aid the Annamites against the
French, and finally sent one band against another in the Laotian
territories which they devastated as far as Nong-Khay. Both mili-
tary and diplomatic action had to be taken by France following the
first Pavie mission in order to suppress them. Those of them who /144/
did not go back to China abandoned their guns to become farmers,
married Thai or Kha wives and thus created a stock of mixed blood
which, by successive crossings, /238/ merged into the mass of the
population.

Restitution of the Prabang by Siam (1867). In the midst of all 648*
the cares which the threats of these invaders caused him, Tiantha- 175*
Koumane had the satisfaction of restoring the venerated statue of 778
the Prabang to his people.

Carried off to Vientiane by Thao-Nong in 1707 and ravished
successively by Chulalok in 1778 and by Bodin in 1828 (1), the

1. See above, pp. 47, 133, 156, 158 and 174.

kingdom's ancient palladium was finally returned by King Mongkut,
in 1867, to Fa-Ngoun's descendant, who sent the Oupahat Oun-Kham
to Bangkok to take solemn possession thereof.

Taken by land as far as Xieng-Mene (Luang-Prabang right bank),
it was displayed for seven days and seven nights at the landing of

648* 175* 778 Ta-Khoc-Hua where great celebrations were held in the presence of the whole court, then transported to the left bank on August 26 and placed on the site of the present royal palace. A temple was immediately built to hold it, but a fire destroyed the building before it was finished and the Prabang was placed in the pagoda of Visoun. Twenty-two /239/ /Page 239 is devoted to an illustration: "The Prabang in the Temple of Vat-Mai."--Translator/ /240/ years later, when this temple threatened to fall into ruins, the statue was transferred to the Wat-Mai (1).

1. Cf. Note of February 21, 1929 by His Eminence the minister of Cults.

The restitution of the statue was to be the last political act of the Siamese monarch, who died on October 1, 1868. In the following year Tiantha-Koumane followed him to the tomb, shortly after Chao-Pho of Xieng-Khouang who was succeeded by his brother Chao-Hung.

OUN-KHAM (1811 - December 15, 1895), KING 1872-1887.

643* 648* 175* The Oupahat Oun-Kham, who was fifty-eight years old, mounted the throne of Luang-Prabang and was assisted by his cousin Souvanna-Phouma as second king, but he did not receive the investiture from the new suzerain Chulalongkorn until 1872. The hesitation is a further mark of the care which the government of Bangkok took in every circumstance to strengthen its mastery over the territories of the left bank of the Mekong.

648* 175* Henceforth checked by Britain in its plans for expansion both towards Burma and in the Malay Peninsula, Siam had just terminated, in a way which it had obviously /241/ not foreseen ten years earlier, the long struggle against Annam in Cambodia which it had been pursuing for two centuries. The compromise which it signed with France in 1867 forbade it any new acquisitions in the Kmer kingdom for some time to come (1). No matter how bitter, these results did

1. See above, p. 231, note.

not strike an irremediable blow against its grand design of rebuilding a Thai empire, for it seemed that the weakening of the sovereign of Hue must facilitate the permanent annexation of the northeastern

115: Le Boulanger--149 H-4 (no date) 1931 AM1 Indochina
(1700-1887) Laotians AM8

778

Fig. 13. The Prabang in the Temple of Vat-Mai.

/Facing p. 238/

under the rocks, where it loses itself in an immense grotto. It can be navigated by pirogues in all seasons from Keng-Kièt on. 505 133

The large island of Don-Don is found between Pak-Hin-Boun and Lakhône.

Lakhone is an important center on the right bank located opposite Tha-Khèk, which is the nearest point to the Annam coast on the whole Mékong (1). [361]

(1) From Tha-Khèk to the mouth of the Cua-Nhuong (Hatinh) is reckoned 180 kilometers as the crow flies.

Just below the 17th parallel is found Muong-Panom, the holy city [87] [Illustration] [88] [Blank page] [89] of Laos and a celebrated spot of pilgrimage, by reason a That (1) which is said to contain relics [178]

(1) A that is a kind of stele or four-sided pyramid.

of Buddha. Opposite Panom, on the left bank, the Sé-Bang-Fai flows into the Mékong.

The Sé-Bang-Fai comes from the Annamitic Chain. It has a sinuous and extremely long course, but cannot be navigated in any season except by pirogues as far as Pou-Houa, that is to say for a distance of about eighty kilometers.

Below its mouth, and thirty kilometers upstream from Savannakhèt, is the Keng-Kabao. The latter deserves mention here, for during the low water period it forms an insurmountable obstacle for steam launches, which never go below this point from November to July.

Difficulties in navigation do not begin until after Hueûn-Hin, and the steam launches of the River Merchant Fleet Company [compagnie des Messageries fluviales] could reach that point during the high water period if there were any commercial advantage to be gained by so doing.

A series of rapids stretches over a length of about 160 kilometers between Hueûn-Hin and Pak-Moun. These are known as the "rapids of Kemmarat" because of the large muong (2) on the right bank which

(2) Muong = province; also means capital of a province. [631]

is located along this part of the river. They are a succession of rapids

792
785
554

Although less pure than in Cambodia, the bonzes' morals in Laos are generally fairly good. They are, moreover, greatly loved, highly regarded and fondly cherished. When there is a celebration or a great feast in a family, part of the choicest dishes is always reserved for the bonzes.

On the next to the last day of every phase of the moon, the bonzes must make public confession of their faults and be prepared, should the need arise, to undergo the punishments which the code stipulates.

792

Bonzeries are schools and at the same time workshops where all trades are taught. All knowledge is concentrated in them, as our knowledge was during the Middle Ages in monasteries.

871
874

Together with the pagodas, they are also spots of inviolable asylum in accordance with certain rights, and hostelries where travelers are lodged and fed with the produce of the bonzes' alms-seeking.

485
778

Newly ordained bonzes must stay in the pagoda at least three months, and may quit their habit at the end of this period. If a bonze desires to return to the pagoda after he has reentered lay life, his reassumption of the habit gives rise to the same formalities and ceremonies as the first time. It is a new ordination.

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The liturgical litanies of the Buddhist religion, which the bonzes psalmodize, may not be translated into Laotian. The bonzes and the [165] [Illustration] [166] [Blank page] [167] Laotian faithful, as well as the cantors and the French adepts, chant prayers whose meaning they do not understand (1).

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(1) In reality the Laotian, Lu and Youn bonzes form a sort of caste as the Druids used to in Gaul. More particularly, they are the ministers of worship, the repositories of moral authority, of scientific traditions, of secrets and of artistic and industrial methods. They transmit by word of mouth the precepts of Buddhist dogma, which were long ago explained by those who introduced the religion into the land. But the writings in "Pali" which contained these, although they can still be read mechanically by a few scholars, are no longer understood. Thence arises the necessity of handing down their meaning by word alone. Thence also, without doubt, arises the increasingly greater attenuation of the purity and force of these principles as they

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149: Reinach--124a G-3 (no date) 1901 AMI Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Fig. 43 /p.165/ A ceremony in the Wat-Si-Saket Pagoda in Vien-Tiane.

346 Pagodas are always built on ground which has been perfectly leveled, is quite extensive and is surrounded by a wooden palisade or brick wall of elbow height.

[485] Within the pagoda enclosures there are bonzeries and dependent structures to serve as quarters for the bonzes, schools for their pupils and hostelries for travelers.

735 The construction and upkeep of pagodas are entirely dependent on the generous liberality of the faithful. Thus these edifices can be used 346 as a criterion for discovering both the state of prosperity of a region and the religious faith of its inhabitants.

[778] As used to be the case for our churches, Laotian pagodas and even their enclosures are, according to the customs of the land, sanctuaries which confer immunity against legal prosecution for certain crimes and misdemeanors.

[527] It is also in the enclosure and sometimes under the cloisters and verandas of the pagodas that the inhabitants gather on the legal holidays, and also private holidays, which are known as "Ngans".

844 Childbirth. Dr. Estrade describes the delivery of a woman of southern Laos as follows. The preliminaries, the operation itself and post-delivery procedure are the same, with only slight differences in detail, in northern Laos, and we may therefore quote Dr. Estrade's description as applicable to all of Laos in general.

"Childbirth never takes place in the house inhabited by the pregnant woman or her direct relatives, but always in the home of a neighbor or distant relative who gives hospitality to the patient until she is up and about again. The duration of pregnancy is counted in moons, as in all calculations of time, the moon being the essential element for the Laotian in the measurement of time and the occurrence of a great many phenomena. When a woman reaches the last moon 777 of her pregnancy she takes certain precautions all tending to delay 821 delivery until the first phase of the new moon, since births during the last phases are signs of misfortune [189] such as the death of the child, deformity, etc. These prejudices have such force that parents are [782] careless in caring for any child born during the last phases of the moon, and in such a case all of their effort goes into prayers, offerings to the bonzes and the making of votive offerings (1)

(1) This assertion should not, however, be taken too literally or in any general sense. This is a prejudice which is kept up by the bonzes in their own self-interest, and is easy to see through. (Author's note.)

323 The potters' methods and equipment do not differ from those which are in widespread use everywhere.

The method of firing depends on the nature of the article, and firing may be done either in kilns dug out of the clay soil, in the banks of watercourses, or under stacks of rice straw. Wood or rice straw is used to fire the kilns.

In some regions articles are given a shiny black patina resembling graphite by firing them for a second time in paddy husks.

326 778 411 415 **Brass-founding.** One has only to explore the pagodas of Laos in order to realize that brass-founding used to be held in honor. Religious statues can be found which are sometimes of great [458] weight and usually of quite fine workmanship and taste, taking into account, to be sure, the quite special manner in which they conceive esthetics.

Although the crucibles have not been fired for many long years for casting such large pieces, the industry of brass-founding continues to be exercised by a certain number of specialists who are content with producing religious statuettes, necessities for betel, bells for elephants and livestock, various kinds of vases, cuspidors, etc.

This industry is an extremely ancient one in the land. It was certainly practiced during the Bronze Age, as is attested by the spear-heads, daggers, hatchets and halberds which have been found in northern Laos and which can now be seen in the Saint-Germain museum.

[821 172] It is interesting to note that the inhabitants of Laos attribute a meteoric origin to objects of the Bronze Age, as also to those of the Age of Polished Stone. They believe that these objects fall from the sky when it thunders, and that they are produced by lightning.

The following are some of the methods used by Laotian founders. Casting is always done by the lost wax process.

325 532 **Casting statues.** On an initial rough clay model, the artist applies a layer of fine, soft and well-pugged clay which he shapes in a more careful manner. Then after covering the statue, which is already much more than a rough draft, with a layer of bees-wax of the proper thickness, he finishes modeling the statue on the wax, inserting all the details and all the ornaments which it is to include. Polishing a bit here, engraving there, setting precious stones or simply glass between the eyelids to represent eyes, and inserting gold lips where the mouth is to be located, he gives the

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When thus prepared the mold and the crucible, which form a single block, are placed on the furnace with the crucible undermost, amidst the charcoal which is given a forced draft with an alternating bellows. What happens then cannot be imagined. The wax melts with the first heat and falls into the crucible, leaving a void between the two walls of the mold which the metal will fill. As soon as the latter is ready, as can be seen by the color of the flames which come out through the lateral openings, the founder seizes the block with a pair of tongs and turns it upside down suddenly so as to pour the contents of the crucible automatically into the cavity of the mold. After the metal has cooled the clay envelope is broken like an egg shell, and the object appears with the shape and relief or chased ornaments which the wax model possessed.

The founders use various alloys, depending on whether the objects which they are making are statues, common utensils or bells. Some are made of brass, zinc and tin, others of red copper, silver and bronze from old gongs, etc. Sometimes, when the statue is a religious one, the faithful are impelled by their ardor to throw gold and silver jewelry and coins into the crucible.

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The principal pieces of equipment of the founder are the bellows, crucibles, tongs, a series of sculptor's boasters, an alternating turn-bench, graving tools, scrapers, hammers, etc.

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Basketry. The inhabitants of Laos, especially the Khas, are past masters in the art of basketry, and the objects which come from their hands have a finish, a delicacy, a seal of elegance and a purity of form which are surprising at first sight.

Rattan, certain kinds of bark and thin skins and strips of bamboo are the materials used in basketry.

The main articles produced by this industry include floor mats, bed mats, calibrated baskets for measuring grain, buckets for drawing water, large baskets, baskets for holding cooked rice, platter covers, trays with feet, boxes for betel necessities, baskets to carry on the back, bird cages, hats, etc.

[463] Most basketwork articles are delivered unfinished, although some are smoked or else lacquered black or red. Except for a few articles which find a market outside of the region of manufacture, but always within the limits of Laos, it may be said that the basketwork industry is an entirely local one.

The Khas, moreover, do not have a monopoly in this industry, and all the inhabitants of Laos are basket makers to a greater or less degree.

the fourteenth century. Archaeological discoveries made in recent years in the region of Luang Prabang and more recent ones in the neighborhood of Vientiane may enable this important event in the religious history of Laos to be moved back more than two centuries.

[23] The Pagoda.

"Laotians liked to place their pagodas on high points, but their marked taste for the edge of the water made them prefer the neighborhood of rivers. This location of pagodas is a natural consequence of the relations between bonzes and inhabitants. The former drew their livelihood from the latter, and these are crowded on the river banks." In principle the pagoda consists of three elements:

1) The buildings connected directly with the cult: vat, chapels, libraries; that, standing landmarks and niches;

2) The surrounding enclosures, exterior and interior;

3) The buildings for the immediate use of the inhabitants of the pagoda: monastery [bonzerie], cells for the bonzes, reception halls.

The vat consists of a large hall furnished with a pedestal on which stands the statue of the Buddha often accompanied by a preaching pulpit. The columns and walls are frequently ornamented with paintings.

Among the annexes of the vat, the most numerous are the chapels which are in the form either of delicate buildings or small compound halls.

The that is a votive and sometimes a funereal monument. (See appendix on Vientiane).

The only piece of furniture always found in the vat is the preaching pulpit, an elegant construction, often made of gilded wood. By way of furniture there are a few seats for the chiefs of the bonzes, particularly for the torch bearer. Finally, particularly in the region of Luang Prabang, one finds the hang-lin, a curious spout-shaped object, with elegant decoration, which is used for sprinkling the Buddhas on great feast days (cf. the New Year). These various finely carved objects are usually made of gilded wood and are sometimes inlaid with enamelled lead [24] whose brilliant gleam makes them sparkle. The manuscript chests are usually collected in the libraries, piled up in the shape of an inverted pyramid; they are generally carved and gilded.

include all the local genii one comes across in Indochina, either under the name of Neak Ta in Cambodia, or Phi in Laos, to mention only two countries. The cult of the Phi is still very much alive in Laos, although it has long been contested by the Buddhist clergy and forbidden by an edict of Phothisarath in 1527.

[30] But there are several classes of phi. First of all there are the universal phi, those are the ones which Buddhist tradition has attempted to assimilate for better or worse.

The book of Khun Bolom says precisely that the Phi Fa (Phi of heaven) and the Phi Then are in reality Indra, and the guardians of the four worlds. The Phi Sua Muon are Nang Tholani (Dharani, goddess of the earth) and Nang Mekhala (Manimekhala, deity of the sea). Finally there is the Phi Then Ten (Visvakarman, the builder).

The local protecting genii of the kingdom of Lan Xan are the fifteen Nagaraja (Praya Nak) who are the genii of water, living in the river rapids, at the confluence of rivers, on the rocks on the river banks or in caves. Their natural form is that of a serpent, but they can also take on human form.

Then follow the familiar genii, the wandering phi (Phi Pho), and the phi of dwellings (Phi Heuan). The Phi Heuan are honored at the time of marriage, and the Laotian code prescribes the indemnities which must be paid to please the Phi. There are also the phi of parents [or relatives--Translator] (Phi Me). These are often confused with the preceding ones. Their cult is celebrated either inside the house, or outside in a small shelter built for this purpose. This little structure is usually built leaning against a tree; sometimes it contains a small statuette or a stone, or even nothing. In that case one finds only a few grains of glutinous rice, and one or two small sticks of incense in a horn made of a banana leaf. This little house is the home of the Phi. He watches the living from the beyond and manifests himself every time a member of the family behaves badly. His intervention is most often known by a sudden and serious illness. One must then try to find out what has displeased the phi. For this one goes to the "sorcerer" and he will indicate [31] the sacrifice which must be made to the phi to appease his anger."

There exist also village phi to whom honor and offerings are due at the time of every ritual or local ceremony, particularly about the seventh month. Coinciding with a sort of pause in the ordinary activity of the Laotian, a pause which is regulated by a change in season, return of the rains and the rise of the Mekong waters, the feasts of the "months of the spirits" are centered around the evocation

342 bedrooms separated from each other by partitions or curtains, the
[178] other is the communal room. In the space between the inner and outer beam, and not limited by the longitudinal partition, is the altar on which there are always one or several buddhas. It is placed on the side of the bedrooms, on the "soung" side of the dwelling, that is on the side opposite the entrance. The dimensions of the dwellings vary between six and twenty-four meters long by four to nine meters wide.

342 The houses are most often open to the east or to the north. They
823 may also overlook what is passing by in the streets or the paths and, as the case may be, the whole length of the river. For there is a superstition which forbids building "across the current," which is considered as unconquerable and invincible, and it would be dangerous to defy it.

343 The outhouses consist of an adjoining kitchen and a granary, a
[252] few meters removed from the principal dwelling. Near this granary is found the picturesque rice pestle (khok khao) which the women work with their feet.

343 [62] All the villagers participate in building the house. When the
476 propitious day and moment have been determined, the owner feeds everybody the whole time the house is being built.

Tattooing

301 Every self-respecting Laotian must be tattooed. The absence of
885 tattooing is a sign of mental and moral, therefore of social, inferiority.
562 As a general rule, however, the Laotian woman is not tattooed. This custom is found only among the women of Youan, Kha or Lu.

301 The Laotian is tattooed chiefly on his thighs, forearms and chest. The tattooing on the thighs is so close together that from a distance a tattooed man looks as if he were wearing close-fitting blue shorts. The Laotians are called "white bellies" as opposed to those who are tattooed down to the navel and are then called black bellies. The colors used for tattooing are indigo blue, red, and black made from a mixture of lampblack diluted with buffalo gall.

[751] Those who have been tattooed are convinced that the signs they wear give them certain supernatural powers, particularly making them invulnerable to bullets and snake bites. During the events of 1941 Siamese soldiers were found wearing white cotton vests covered with cabalistic signs closely related to tattooing. These are a kind of removable tattooing intended to protect those who are wearing them.

173: Deydier --68 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 AM1 Indochina
(ca. 1940) Laotians AM8

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Fig. XI. The walking Buddha. Bronze of the Louis Finot Museum. Hanoi. (Cl. E.F.E.O.)